

HSS Department - Response to ARC Report September 2009

The HSS Department concurs with the proposed structure of a four-year B.Tech/ B.S. programme in general. Some specific comments follow:

- The Department concurs with the proposed credit system (C =3L+2T+P+A) and appreciates the recommendation that the number of HSS courses be raised to five (the HSS courses will form 11.3 -11.7% of the UG curriculum). It agrees that HSS courses should not have tutorials (except in the first semester). The Department feels that the teaching of management, communication skills, and foreign languages must be delinked from HSS.

- The Department is in agreement with the proposed framework of technical communication skills course (EDT+ Remedial English+Web Course+Technical Communication+Writing Laboratory) and concurs that in the departmental courses students should be evaluated for both content and communication skills.

- The Department concurs with the provision of a completely tutorial based language-intensive course for the students identified through the English Diagnostic Test (EDT). However, there is a need to review the provision that this course would retain its present format of teaching, i.e., teaching approximately 90 students in three sections of 30 each. In view of the significant rise in student intake in the undergraduate programme, there may be a need to offer ENG112C to a larger number of students. In order to maintain an optimal class size of 30, more faculty members would be required to teach this course.

Therefore, the Institute needs to increase the number of faculty in English and Linguistics, and also enhance the Language Lab facilities. Another view that has been expressed is that teaching of ENG112C may be conducted by faculty from outside IITK (taken on contract), or may be outsourced. The responsibility need not be assigned entirely to the English and Linguistics faculty of the HSS Department.

Since the English discipline in the HSS Department also includes Linguistics, "English" may be referred to as "English and Linguistics".

- At present the HSS Department has only one undergraduate programme – M.Sc in Economics, which will be changed to a four-year B.S. in Economics. The Department would like to offer dual degree MS programmes in Economics as well as other streams of HSS.

The Economics group will develop the structure of the M.S. programme with the provision that students of B. Tech./B.S. (especially those in B.S. in Economics) can get a dual degree in Economics by spending one more year in the department. The Economics group, while agreeing with the broad parameters of the proposed four-year B.S., is examining the issues pertaining to a second major such as exit option, honors degree, and ESO.

At present the students of M.Sc. Economics are advised to take Probability and Statistics as one ESO, and one more ESO with the advice of Convener, DUGC. The department proposes to continue with this practice.

- The HSS Department agrees to offer Minors in different existing disciplines and would explore the possibility of offering multi-disciplinary Minors.

With reference to the section on 'Minors' (page 16, ARC Report), the sentence "A cap of less than 125 students is not permissible in a course floated as part of a minor unless the course makes extensive use of laboratory equipments", needs clarification.

The HSS Department does not envisage any change in the class size of HSS courses when they are offered as part of minors.

- The Department is of the view that adding new disciplines like Political Science, Indian and World History, and the like would enrich the HSS content of the curriculum. Such new disciplines should be proposed by the HSS Department.
- In the present circumstances, the system of offering HSS courses through a preference-cum-lottery method is working well. Students who are highly motivated to do a particular HSS course but unable to register through the preference-cum-lottery method, are invariably accommodated through the provision of add-and-drop.
- The Department strongly feels that the graduation requirement should not be lowered to 4.0, and the present CPI required for graduation should continue.
- The Department supports the idea that two one-hour mid semester examinations may be replaced by one two-hour mid semester examination.

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